

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

My name is CJ Parker, I'm a resident of **New London, CT** and I'm writing to you today **on behalf of Hearing Youth Voices** to express my support for Senate Bill 948.

Connecticut may be among the top 5 states in the country for K-12 education, but we are doing a huge disservice to so many of our students. The past year has made it clearer than ever that our schools and our children need to be funded fully, equitably, and immediately.

Hearing Youth Voices' framework "Schools That Work For Us" has a similar goal as Senate Bill 948, with the aim of attaining educational equity through bold and deliberate changes. We believe that the fact that schools are funded by property taxes means that rich communities have rich schools, and poor communities have poor schools. A student's race should not determine whether they are successful in school and we have the obligation to make sure it doesn't. This is further supported by the \$640 million gap in education funding between white students and students of color. The funding system is classist and racist, and we should not be okay with that.

In our city of New London, public schools have a graduation rate 20% lower than the national average. Additionally, New London also has one of the highest poverty rates in New England, with 29% of residents living below the poverty line. We all know the correlations between education and life outcomes are well documented, so it would be reasonable to assume that New London, as well as other cities and towns with a similar demographic and stats would be doing their best to uplift their poverty levels. However, this has not been the case. Instead, these modes of oppression continue to play out. When combined with the intersectional nature of our livelihoods, when we think about students whose home languages are not English, we run into an additional issue that needs to be remedied. 32.6% of New London residents fit into this category, and would greatly benefit from English classes and/or increased translators in order to remove language barriers. This is an additional component that affects life outcome, career, and educational opportunities, but similar to the financial educational gap, is widely ignored.

By passing S.B. 948, you can help address these disparities, reduce the state's racial funding gap by 68%, and make sure students are at the center of the conversation about education funding.

Over the past year, many have talked about the need for equity in our state. Equity starts with education and opportunities for all of our students. I'm counting on all of you to take every single student into account when you're making decisions about how to fund their education, and to give all of our students a fighting chance to not only succeed, but excel.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you to support S.B. 948.

Sincerely,
Hearing Youth Voices